

Christ In The Home

Booklet 2. Part 1.

By Raoul Plus, S.J.

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Daily Meditations on Marriage and the Home.

THE HOME.

GREAT ADVENTURERS.

CHARLES PEGUY, the great French poet, called all fathers of families, “these great adventurers of the modern world.”

How correct he was! What courage is needed to step out before life, with a companion on one’s arm, aspiring to have children and hoping that Mother Earth will be able to support and nourish their own little world!

Certainly, the joy that attends the birth of a babe is sweet. Here is how a father describes it:

When one sees a little one so weak yet so well formed one loves the Creator still more and how much more one thanks Him for giving us life! What a beautiful mystery maternity is! To see a young mother feeding her babe suffices to incite one to adore God. There is nothing more touching than to see this dear little treasure resting in the arms of its mother. It was baptized on March 28. What a majestic ceremony it was and how proud one feels to be able to say his son is a Christian!

But what anguish is suffered if the children are sick; if the mother’s strength fails beneath her work. How anxious one grows when the little ones cough and gasp for breath. And even if all goes well as far as health is concerned, there is no end to buying clothes, having shoes resoled, and providing food for the ever hungry mouths.

When the children grow up, one must be concerned about their education. One must start thinking about high school and college for the boys and the girls. Which school is best? Which teachers are best qualified? Will they take the same interest in our children that we the parents do? Will they give them what they really need to face life?...

Then come the sudden worries — auto accidents, accidents in sports, war in which the worst bodily dangers threaten!

But worse still and more serious by far are the soul dangers — the boy who keeps bad hours, who has an evil tongue and a shifty glance, who evades questions and begins to lie.

Yes, indeed, what magnificent and courageous adventurers are fathers of families!

A reporter recounted the enthusiastic acclaim the people of Paris gave the intrepid sailor Alain Gerbault who had succeeded in sailing around the world in a very frail skiff after 700 days at sea, in 1929.

“For my part,” said the reporter, “I gave to Alain Gerbault the recognition that was his due.”

But in the crowd that had gathered about the famous sailor, the newspaper man found himself next to a family of rather humble means to judge by their appearance, although they did not lack dignity. There were five children with the father and mother, all modestly and neatly dressed. The father was explaining to his sons, “Oh, what an admirable type is this Gerbault! What a hero!”

“I shared that idea,” commented the reporter, “but I thought that father was also a hero to pilot a skiff loaded down with children on the Parisian ocean as he was doing... I even wondered if it were not more admirable than to guide a boat on the high sea with only oneself to think of.”

THE PSALM OF YOUNG MOTHERS.

A YOUNG mother — very true to her role of mother and at the same time very artistic — got the idea of comparing her role with that of cloistered sisters. Between her washing, her cooking and the care of her youngest, she managed to compose “The Psalm of Young Mothers” which appeared in the 8 November, 1941, issue of “Marriage Chretien.” It is full of love, full of spontaneity. Every young mother will recognize herself in these passages we are quoting:

“O my God,
Like our sisters in the cloister
We have left all for you;
We have not imprisoned the youth of our faces in a gimp
and under a veil,
And though we have cut our hair, it is not in any spirit
of penance...

Deign nevertheless, O Lord, to cast a look of complaisance
On the humble little sacrifices
Which we offer You all day long,
Since the day our groaning flesh gave life to all these little
Christians
We are rearing for You.

Our liberty, O God, is in the hands of these little tyrants
who claim it every minute.
The house has become our cloister,
Our life has its unchanging Rule,
And each day its Office, always the same;
The Hours for dressing and for walks,
The Hours for feeding and for school,
We are bound by the thousand little demands of life.

Detached by necessity every moment from our own will,
We live in obedience.
Even our nights do not belong to us;
We too have our nocturnal Office,
When we must rise quickly for a sick child,
Or when between midnight and two o’clock,
When we are in the full sleep we need so badly

A little untimely chanter
Begins to sing his Matins.

We practically live retired from the world:
There is so much to be done in the house.
There is no possibility of going out anyway
without a faithful sitter for the little ones.
We measure out the time for visits parsimoniously.
We have no sisters to relieve us on another shift.

And when the calls for service reach high pitch for us
We have to sweep, to wash the dishes, scrape the carrots
for the stew, prepare a smooth puree for baby
and keep on going without stopping
From the children's room to the kitchen and to and fro.
We do big washings we rub and we rinse
Aprons and shirts, underclothes and socks
And all the baby's special things.

In this life of sacrifice, come to our help, O Jesus!

UP TO DATE.

ONE of our modern novels gives us the following situation: Gina Valette is a woman who is "up to date" in the unpleasant sense of the term. Very rich and provided with a husband who thoroughly spoils her, she has dogs, cats, a parrot, and a monkey, but no children. Her brilliant existence palls on her. Among her friends are mothers with children who courageously use their modest resources to advantage and rear quite a family. Often when an epidemic breaks out among the children of a family, a friend of the family will take two or three of the others for the time.

To cure Gina of her depressed spirits, her friend Jamine persuades her to take young Gilles Perdrinix whose five brothers and sisters have the chickenpox. Gina is bewildered; she knows perfectly how to care for a monkey but she finds herself embarrassed before this little Perdrinix boy who judged her severely from the height of his four years.

"How ignorant she is! How much is lacking in her training!" Little Gilles sighed to think of it. "She knows how to smoke," he said to himself sadly, "but she can't give me a lift to button my shirt." He did not complain nor did he reproach her; but on seeing her so clumsy, he thought she had much to learn to become a woman like other women.

Happily, there are other kinds.

A mother of a family and a brilliant author wrote in the preface of a volume on "The Mother" which she was requested to write by the editor of a series entitled "The Up to Date Woman," "How shall I ever write this little book? There are no up-to-date mothers. There are only Mammias."

And with charming dash coupled with irresistible conviction, she gave young wives this advice:

"Little Lady, you are embarking upon married life on the arm of a husband who is all taken up with you, who probably wants nothing more than to believe in you, to follow you and to approve of everything that touches the essence of your being. Do not listen to those frustrated women or those soured unmarried girls, or those Jezebels who have nothing of the matron about them but their age

and have no real experience; do not let them draw you out of the right way. Be convinced, that the joy which babies bring is inexpressible and makes up for all the torment and fatigue of bearing them. Be certain that the sight of that plump, smooth little body; of those dimpled hands and feet, both like pink silk yet provided with sharp nails; of that darling little mouth with its toothless smile, so simple and so trustful that the bright look, so marvelously pure, the soft cheeks, the silky hair, the utter quiet abandonment of this little being who issued forth from us floods our soul with an intense and intimate ecstasy such as I have never known before.

If only the up-to-date woman would be a mother for the future.

After the dark hours of the war, new life must be born.

There will be lives only if there are mothers, mothers who respond to their essential and divine vocation.

Even if there were not this motive of special need, eternal reasons still have force — the law of fecundity and the law of chastity:

Although it is permissible for married persons to abstain from the conjugal act or to perform it only when there is the least possibility of conception provided their reasons are not selfish; if they do perform the marital act they may do nothing to prevent the generation of a life which is in the plan of God. That is clear.

Give me, O my God, the grace through respect for You and for Your work, always to have a devotion to and a respect for life; grant that I may never sully my own existence by any criminal attempt upon new life. Grant me also the grace to be in Your Hands a not too unworthy instrument of Your creative power. Let me be “up-to-date” whenever it is a question of enrolling a new name in the Book of Life.

PATERNAL SOLICITUDE.

IN ORDER to fulfill his task conscientiously, a father needs singular qualities.

First among these qualities is an unfailing courage. In homes where life is easy — and in what family today is life easy — he can rest on the fortune amassed by his ancestors. But that melts so soon. In homes where the family lives truly on the daily bread, how much he must exert himself to earn that bread for the day. There's more than one meal that has to be provided for a single day. And the clothing? And the shoes? And the bills — from the doctor, the pharmacist, the grocer? Days follow upon each other, weeks overlap and months roll by; the home is augmented by one more. How shall he cope with this world of his?

With courage, the father needs a quiet confidence in God. Surely, if they understand their duty well, true fathers know how to space births somewhat without failing in the least against the laws of marriage; and this for some requires heroic courage. But even then when one does not tempt Divine Providence but lives in a prudent and continent moderation, it is still necessary in order to keep above the surface of life to cast anchor in the deep and wait for the desired help from God — imperturbably serene through it all.

And who will measure the untiring patience that he will need to bear those almost necessary difficulties of character in a most loving and attentive wife; to endure the crying and weeping of the babies at night; to bear with the noisy games of the growing children when he wants to work in quiet; to try to make the income at least balance expenses; to build up a declining business; to find

new openings for his products; to develop a better and wider clientele? Patience alone will see him through!

How he will need authority with the children to reinforce the mother's control who, either because she is too busy or too easy going, lets them take advantage of her now and then!

He will not have this authority without insight which will help him distinguish the predominant character traits of each child and determine the best means to provide for the training of all so that their virtues are developed and their faults are checked; to read their souls, their inmost thoughts, the progress of their dreams for the future...

All in all, what skill, what firmness, what adaptability, what sanctity he will need! And here is just a poor father consecrated such by circumstances and who, just a young fellow himself, has never weighed his future responsibilities — or not very seriously weighed them!

'Oh, how deeply I feel, Holy Virgin Mary, that you must help me. Our Lady of great courage, give me strength! Virgin most patient, give me patience! Seat of Wisdom, give me insight into characters! Mother and Queen of Jesus, give me a gentle, but firm authority!'

'Holy Mary, give me holiness more than all else! I have not attained the degree God wants of me for my mission in life; I am well aware of that. Draw me, O Immaculate Virgin, draw me to the heights; you are so near to God; you dwell in the radiance of His light and His omnipotence; lead me on, higher!'

THE FAMILY.

THE family, a workshop of life for earth, a workshop for eternity!

1. A Workshop of Life: What power to have control over the creation of life! God, who could have created human beings all by Himself wished to give His creatures the gift of a power which belonged only to Him. Consequently, souls will not come into the light unless parents consent to it. They will not create souls, to be sure, but by generating bodies, they furnish God the means of increasing the number of souls.

Have I meditated often enough upon this magnificent power which has been conferred on me? A power which I share equally with her who is the companion of my existence? Have I meditated on the glory of fatherhood? The glory of motherhood? Have I considered what a grave sin it is to place the act which generates life and then to prevent through perverted will the coming of life to a potential human being? Or to snuff out the life which is developing in the womb of the mother?

The author of the novel "Jeanne," though not a Christian, clearly pleads the cause of Christian morals in the play he produced from his novel. The following scene gives in brief the theme of the whole play:

MADELEINE — Jeanne is always present... Do you know the dream I often have? I see a little hand which is trying to open a door. We are very comfortable you and I and we both push against the door with all our strength so that Jeanne cannot come in to take away a little of our ease, our luxury, our warmth... Then the little hand falls down and we begin to count gold pieces so as not to hear anything... A little whimper...

ANDRE — That's a nightmare!...

MADELEINE — For you yes. Remorse is a policeman...

ANDRE — Don't you love me anymore, Madeleine?

MADELEINE — Since we were accomplices... I loved you to folly, but this love was snatched away with my child. When I came back from that abortionist, you noticed no change in my attitude. But Andre it was another woman you clasped in your arms... a sort of dead...

ANDRE — Then, always, forever, that will be between us?

MADELEINE — Not between us, with us!

Have I ever thought of the tragic intimate dramas that conjugal cheating gives rise to in the lives of parents? Have I thought of the harm done to society in times of peace? To the country I love, weakening its defenses, threatening its safety in times of war? To the Church who would have had some saints among those children who were denied birth, in any case, some priests and religious... Have I thought of all that?

2. A Workshop for Eternity: The family not only contributes an increase to earthly existence but it also increases more divine life on earth, and that in two ways — from the moment of its establishment and later: The day the man and woman receive the sacrament of Matrimony, they produce, if we may so dare to speak, more divine life; each of the two become richer in the life of the Trinity within themselves; the Eternal is intermingled to a greater degree in the existence of both. Then come the children. Each will possess within itself the germ of eternity, something of the life which will never end. Death will come to end life here below, but this life is destined to bloom again: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting," we recite in the Creed.

To be sure, the children have free will; they can fail to attain their destiny. The devil and evil concupiscence must always be conquered. But if their origin is Christian, if the parents have done all they possibly could to do their duty and rear their offspring as they ought, it would be failing in Hope to think of the family as being eternally cut off from some of its members.

I shall pray fervently that we may all be reunited in heaven, that we eternally sing the Sanctus as a chorus with not one of us missing.

HEREDITY.

THE profession of fatherhood and motherhood has its responsibilities even before the birth of the children. Someone has said, "Every man is an heir; every man is an ancestor." Just as we receive through our ancestral line many of our traits, so too, we found a line of descendants, and we transmit to those descendants something of what we are ourselves.

If we were free to transmit only the good, how truly it would be worth transmitting! But it does not work that way. It is impossible to foresee what part of us will pass on to our successors. Whoever performs the work of imparting life runs the risk of imparting to the one born of him some of his worst with the best. Wherever there is propagation by generation the mystery of heredity has its place, a frightening place. It is not in vain that God gives this warning in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Exodus: "I am the Lord your God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me; And showing mercy unto thousands to them that love Me and keep my Commandments." There is a similar idea expressed in the prophecy of Ezekiel chapter 18, where the stress is emphasized that everyone has individual responsibility for his own choices.

A certain father took part as a young man in a sinful escapade. He corrupted his blood; a germ entered into him. Should he be astonished then that at the moment in which he transmits life, that very life will be contaminated? He took precautions; he was cured. That is possible. It is not always certain. There are often unpleasant surprises. Even when the malady does not recur in the first generation, it is possible that it may reappear in the second or third or even later.

It is the same in the case of lesser evils which nevertheless leave their corrupting effects — habits of laziness, intemperance in the use of liquor, a wasting of one's forces. It all tells.

The mother also formerly lived too fast. Her life was characterized by an excessive effort to follow the capricious changes in styles, too intense a participation in strenuous sports, an abuse of strong liquors or over-indulgence in smoking, too much loss of sleep because of empty and sophisticated night-life or hours of reading thrillers or indiscriminate running to movies. Here she is now leaning over her baby's cradle. The little thing is weak and puny looking as if it were trouble just to breathe. The doctor is called. There are certainly many reasons for sicknesses and weakness in babies other than the imprudences of the mother and father. But is it not true that in many cases if the doctor were sincere he would have to say: "Madam, there are maladies here which wisdom could prevent but which science cannot circumvent." To have healthy and vigorous children, parents must deserve it.

But far be from us any unjust generalizations! It often happens that in the most deserving families where parents have always done their duty, God may send weak and sickly children either for the sanctification of the parents or for reasons known to Himself alone.

But it still remains true that in many a household an unbelievable thoughtlessness serves as the prelude for so serious an act as the procreative act. How many fathers and mothers ought to meditate on the words spoken by Our Lord with a different implication to the women of Jerusalem as He trudged along to Calvary, "Weep over Yourselves and your children."

What a tragic mystery is human heredity! Physical impurities, and in part, tendencies which foster moral weaknesses can be transmitted to one's descendants. Some children will issue forth victorious over terrible struggles only painfully because there is weighing upon them the crushing weight of faults or frightful frivolities to which others before them have consented!

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.

IT IS worth considering more than once the responsibility that can rest with the parents when some children do not achieve their full possibility or even turn out badly.

Let us of course give due blame to the evil concupiscence which can provoke a painful transformation in children even when the parents have done everything possible.

It remains true just the same that in a good number of cases, the father and the mother or one or the other must plead guilty.

A boy is sent to college. He gets along fine until the sophomore year. From then on, he bungles everything, abandons right conduct, falls in with dangerous companions, carries on 'high' to such an extent that he has to be expelled. And when a professor expresses astonishment, the dean will give this explanation: "It's his background; unfavorable heredity; his brothers were just the same. The mother is a saint, but the father is one of those unfortunate individuals who is ruled by his

senses; he has caused much suffering to his wife. It is just the traces of the father showing up in the children.”

The explanation can be taken for what it is worth. The law of heredity is not a mathematical law. There is no doubt, however, that it is operative, more operative than one thinks.

When heredity is not to blame, it can often be a matter of bad training. How good parents are, how very good, too good, too weak! It is their own formation which is faulty; it should be done over.

A mother brought her young son to the doctor for an examination. The doctor prescribed a remedy. “The medicine was not pleasant to take but it was very potent,” he said. Well and good; they had the prescription filled.

Some time later, they returned to the doctor. “Well, now, how’s our patient?” “Not any better, doctor.” “How’s that? Didn’t the medicine take effect?” “No, doctor, it was too hard to take; he wouldn’t touch it!”

How much botch-work of that kind goes on! Parents satisfy the child’s every whim. They recoil before the first tears, before the mere signs of an outburst, before less than that — a frown, a pout, or a dejected look. They are lost!

Reversing the scriptural phrase, “Cain, where is your brother Abel?” an author speaking of social problems, which can well be duplicated in the family and in education asked, “Abel, what have you done with Cain?” In other words: “You good people, are you not responsible through your faults or your incapacities that some good individuals have become bad?”

I have charge of a soul; I may have a plural charge — several souls. What has been my conduct until now? Do I not have to reproach myself with many faults or at least many weaknesses? And I am surprised at the results obtained! Are they not the logical outcome of my bungling?

Let me examine myself; consider the whole problem seriously; if it is necessary, let me reform.

THE FAMILY SPIRIT.

BEFORE the terrible war of 1939-1945, family spirit was on the decline and on the verge of being lost. There were exterior and interior reasons.

Exterior reasons: Means of travel had become easier and encouraged people to go out as much as possible. At times, the whole household would take the train or auto for an excursion but more often than not one or other member of the family would go off for himself with the car.

Young girls began to leave home more than formerly for purposes of study, Red Cross causes, Social Service training or simply to take a position. Many who had no such need at all left home for no other reason than not to have to remain at home. Anything rather than stay home!

Various activities and organizations were always sufficient excuse or pretext for absence. Household activities held no appeal for these young women and often repelled them. The remembrance of confidences from their mother in some of their intimate sessions frightened some of them.

The world with its perpetual and superficial and useless activity drew many young men and even more young women into its crazy dance and encouraged the desertion of the home.

Interior Reasons: Some homes make no attempt to be attractive; life in them seems too austere to the children; the mother is too busy, the father is always grouchy, upset by the least noise, easily irritated and perhaps, even without knowing it, frigid and abrupt in his manner of speaking... Sometimes there is an unfortunate lack of harmony between the parents. The atmosphere is always charged with a threatening storm. There is no relaxing, no peace, no trust... Each one wants his liberty, to go his own way. The children caught between two fires do not know to which saint they should dedicate themselves. Therefore, they too go away, or if they can't they close up within themselves... Each one in the house stands on his dignity.

It is quite true that children have become more difficult to train. They always have been difficult but they are more of a problem today than in the past. A tendency developed to give them greater leeway which created a greater distance than was wise between fathers and sons and especially between mothers and daughters; it was an imaginary difficulty rather than a real one in many cases but only too frequently it gave rise to a cruel estrangement.

No one can prevent the difference of twenty years more or less between father and son or mother and daughter; that it should be a difference is to be expected; but that it should be a barrier, no! And while there are parents who cannot remember that they were once twenty years old, most of them can.

"I dream of a daughter who will be like me but also very different," wrote a mother; "because I should not like to produce only a duplicate but neither should I like to be only a rough draft of a more perfect pattern."

Then she continues to explain that her daughter will be able to come to her in all confidence to tell her about her first infatuation; she will understand her and will even tell her how she herself at about the age of eighteen fell madly in love with a violinist of exceptional talent and that her own mother so completely entered into sympathy with her that she helped her daughter compose the burning letter of admiration in which her newly-born ardor was poured out... Together mother and daughter waited for the fervent response... which had never come!

Poor children, who feel that their parents do not understand them! But if they do understand! It is their duty not to approve of everything, but they understand! Then they are ready to help, not always by writing a love-letter, but to encourage, to warn, to support the children in their undertakings, to sustain their enthusiasm, to lead them to their goal.

"THE WHOLE SEA."

PEOPLE sometimes say: "What is the use of trying to rear children as good Christians; they will be lost sight of once they enter upon life in the midst of the great masses. Will any one so much as notice their presence? Will they be able to leave their mark? Will they not run the risk of being crushed by the amorphous mass and quickly covered over by some all-embracing platitudes?" Or again, "What is the use of trying to establish a home that is a Christian community, a veritable monastery of Christian virtues — and by that we don't mean an atmosphere like a morgue but an exemplary group governed by Christian devotion and love — when all about us there are only mediocre families? They are not bad but worldly, with no depth to their Christianity. We would be drowned by all the rest!"

Pascal gave the answer to these questions when he said, "The whole sea rises for one stone that is thrown into it." Though it appear but an insignificant pebble in value, it at least assures one's

contribution to a common work. Has it not always been the minority groups who transformed the world?

You say, "What is the use of troubling ourselves and working to form Christians and real men when all about us the mass of humanity is becoming more and more de-Christianized and less virile? Lacordaire suggests an answer similar to Pascal's, "Simple drops of water that we are, we wonder what need the ocean has of us; the ocean could tell us that it is made up of nothing else but little drops of water."

That is true of individuals; it is true of families.

If we could do nothing to effect numbers we can at least effect quality — the policy of the leaven. What matters the thickness and weight of the dough, if the leaven which works in it possesses irresistible force?

Let us throw dynamic Christian personalities into society; where can they be better prepared than in Christian families and institutions? We ought to, that's sure. In the midst of indifferent families, let us settle some distinctly Christian families who do not compromise when duty is involved, who radiate joy, manifest the beauty of virtuous living and bear witness to Christ by apostolic zeal. And then count on God to assure the result.

The result is certain. We must have faith in Him and believe in the power of radiating centers.

"Unless there are in our cities and towns, homes where Christian life flourishes, every hope for Christian civilization is doomed," wrote a university man of note shortly before the last war.

To Christianize a town, a village, a neighborhood, in short any milieu, involves more than multiplying activities which do not even get into the blood-stream of real living; it means an invention of new ways of life, as for example group formation of families, who give a public example of Christian virtues by living in loving and fraternal communities, breaking with the forms of mediocre living and substituting for it in their relations with others a true form of friendship rooted in the Gospel spirit.

What was true before the last war is even truer now. There is still a desperate need for a renovation of the Christian world, and of the whole world for that matter; this renovation will be achieved only through Christian families, by thorough-going Christians within these solid Christian homes, and fervent community groups of Christian families.

HOME LIFE.

SOMEONE has suggested the following "slogans" for Happy Home Life:

1. Always appear before your family in a good humor. Nothing is so depressing for the rest of the family as a father or mother out of sorts. See that the family never has to suffer because of your attack of nerves or your irritability.
2. Never weary in cheering your family with your smile: It is not enough to avoid depressing the family; that is purely negative. You must brighten them up, let their spirits expand. Be especially vigilant when the little ones are around. You must give them the alms of a smile, hard though it be at times. What a pity when children have to say, "I don't like it at our house."
3. Tell what you may tell openly: If something must not be told, then don't tell it. If you may share it then do so. We ought to let others profit by our experience, above all, the family.

4. Amiably show the greatest interest in the least things: The problems of family life are generally not affairs of state. However, everything that concerns the persons we love most in the world should be worthy of interest: the baby's first tooth, the honor ribbon won at school, the entrance of one of the little ones into the Holy Childhood Association.

5. Banish exaggerated asceticism from your life heroically: If your home is Christian and each member of the family is learning to carry his cross, then it is essential to avoid making others suffer by a too ostentatious or inopportune austerity. Besides there is abundant opportunity for self-renunciation in devoting oneself to procuring joy for others. Marie Antoinette de Geuser used to sacrifice her great longing for recollection and her taste for a simple life by accompanying her brothers to evening affairs for which she wore dresses that she said "made her look vain."

6. Be very attentive to treat all alike. Nothing is so disrupting to home life as the evidence of favoritism for one or the other child. The same measure for all!

7. Never think of yourself, but always of them, in a joyous spirit:

Henry the Fourth, King of France, used to crawl around on all fours, with his children on his back, to enliven the family get-together. Louis Racine, the son of the famous playwright Jean Racine, relates of his father, "My father was never so happy as when he was free to leave the royal court and spend a few days with us. Even in the presence of strangers, he dared to be a father; he belonged to all our games. I remember our procession in the garden in which my sisters were the clergy, I was the pastor and the author of "Athalie" came along carrying the cross, singing with us."

8. Never begin an argument, always speak prudently. Discussion should not be banned unless it develops into bickering or argument. A free habit of exchanging ideas on a broadening subject cannot but be profitable; the children should even be encouraged and led into it to develop in them a wise and discriminating mind and a habit of suspended judgment. Unsavory and disturbing subjects as well as those beyond their depth ought naturally be avoided.

9. Act patiently always, answering graciously always: That it takes the "patience of an angel" to rule vigilantly over the little world of the family is beyond question. I must apply myself to it affably.

10. By good-will, you will gain hearts and souls without exception:

Love much — that is the key to it all.

These slogans for a Happy Home Life are not marvels of prose but they do express a precious rule of wise family discipline.

THE FAMILY TABLE.

MEALTIME should serve not only to nourish the body but also to comfort the soul.

Someone wittily said: "Repast, repose." Whoever it was made a good point.

While the children are still little the mother and father will probably breakfast alone. When they are older, if the father cannot be present because of his work, the mother at least should be present to set the example for table etiquette, to make sure that the children eat enough, properly, without greediness, and without rejecting what is not to their liking. This is the hour for the household to shake off sleepiness which still stupefies them, and to season the atmosphere with joy and genial good spirit.

At the main meals, all except the babies will be present. The parents should exercise the greatest care not to come to table laden with their worries, a prey to the preoccupations of their duties or their professional activities. The only possible exception to this rule would probably be during a time of family bereavement or exceptional sorrow. But even then, a just mean should be observed so that the young ones need not be unduly depressed. They ought to keep all their verve and to a certain point, their power of fancy.

Except when it is essential that the whole family share the concerns of all in common, the father and mother should not come to table looking downhearted and pass the mealtime discussing their hard lot in life. Children are quick to sense the worry of their parents, they feel that things are not going well, if there is tension or estrangement, if evil has hit the home. When they perceive things of this sort, their little hearts contract and a certain unease strangles them.

And why make someone who is not equal to it bear the burden and heat of the day?

After the first few moments in which the father and mother exchange a few words about decisions they must make concerning affairs which need not be kept from the children, they ought to direct the conversation here and there to the younger and the older; let them tell how they spent the morning or afternoon; show an interest in the efforts of all, in the work they did, the virtues they practiced or the disappointments they met. Even if the father and mother have heavy cares, they should force themselves to escape from them long enough to be attentive listeners to the thousand details that all wish to recount. Each one must know that he can speak freely, provided that it is always politely, discreetly and charitably. Should there be some little chatterboxes, they must be taught to moderate their intemperance which would prevent others from having their say. If one of the children seems to be in bad humor, he should be stimulated by a little kindly teasing, a kind word or an opportune question.

When the children pull out all the stops, call for pianissimo; when they observe too long a pause speed up the tempo. Should one or the other strike a false note, get him back in the key again.

The parents should not be satisfied with listening to the little stories of their children. They too should contribute to the broadening of their knowledge by giving them worthwhile information, relating an amusing or instructive story or starting a discussion on an interesting subject.

Rene Bazin, the novelist, speaks of those families in the North of France who still keep to the custom of beginning the meal with a short reading from the life of some saint or famous hero. Wasn't it Father Lourdel who entered the White Fathers after hearing the story of the African martyrs? All that relaxes, elevates, and lends variety. It might even be a reading from the letter of a relative or a selection from a newspaper. The main idea should be to entertain and as far as possible expand hearts.

A CHRISTIAN SETTING.

ONE of the most touching descriptions is found in the account by Louis Veuillot, the famous journalist who died in 1883, of his visit to the home of one of his old friends whom he had not seen since the day of his marriage fifteen years before.

The visitor was admitted by the old servant who did not recognize him; he had to give his name. "Come," she said, "The Master is upstairs with Madam in their own room."

They went up. It was still the blue room whose picturesque decoration his old friend had admired so much in days past.

He recognized his friend despite the work of the years upon his features; his eyes were still keen, but it was evident that he had been weeping. The wife he remembered only vaguely.

“In my memory she was the fairy of youth dressed in flowing robes, crowned with flowers, with a smile on her lips, approaching reality over the green roads of Spring. A smile that nothing chased away, a mind that had never known fear, ears which had heard nothing but gentle words, hands which carried only wreaths of flowers, she personified the morning, the gloom, the promise of life. So she appeared to me on her Wedding Day — a Christian woman yet a child, a harmony of beauty, faith, love, candor. She was earnest because she believed; happy because she loved; radiant because she was pure.

“Now after fifteen years she is a wife who has aged from the cares of her home; she is a daughter in mourning for her mother, a mother in mourning for her children.

“On her pallid face the torrents of her tears have furrowed more deeply the traces of the years; in her heart, submission to the Cross; she stifles the sob of Rachel. I remembered that we used to call her Stella Matutina, Morning star; now, I thought, we would have to call her Mater dolorosa, Mother of sorrows.”

Then his eyes glanced at the walls of the room. They were not adorned as before. Formerly, there had been no crucifix. Now there was one. It occupied the place once held by a picture of Diana, the Goddess of the Chase. A little distance away, there was a picture of Mary at the Foot of the Cross. “We put it there to replace some poetic pictures at the time our first child died,” the husband explained.

He continued, “This design above the dressing table where we used to have the painting of “The Great Festival of Watteau” is a copy of my father’s tombstone in the village cemetery. It is over in that direction that I began to build and the cypress trees around the house are the first trees I planted. Here at the side is the picture of my wife’s mother; she died in this room, which we alone can use from now on. These other pictures are what remains to us now of all the dear souls who reared us, worked and suffered for us and provided so tenderly for our happiness. And here is a picture of our dear little Therese, our little saint, the second child God took from us. She left us last year when she was only six years old. She cried out before she died, ‘God, God, where is God? I want to go to God!’ She took with her the last happy days of her mother.”

All that does not depress souls. Earth after all is not heaven. It is only the vestibule. That in itself is beautiful. And, as the author explains at the end of his description, “separations only increase our confidence, love and peace.”

JUDICIOUS ECONOMY.

CHRISTIANITY demands detachment. Of all, interior detachment — to use things as if we did not use them. Of some, complete exterior detachment — the vow of poverty for religious which differs in degree of severity according to the Rules of the Order entered, from the actual and rigid deprivation of the disciples of Saint Francis of Assisi to the simple dependence relative to the possession of things or administration of money required in Congregations which are less austere.

But what should be the degree of effective poverty required or at least desired in people of the world?

We hear people speak of the “duty of improvidence” or the “virtue of insecurity.” What are we to think of these expressions and the ideal they express?

It is certain that love of gain is dangerous and that privation when accepted in the right spirit detaches.

It is equally certain that normal gain, that is to say not beyond bounds and obtained through honest means, is legitimate. Furthermore, economy, when it is not grounded in avarice or inordinate attachment to money but in the virtue of prudence, is not to be condemned.

With the good sense for which he is famous, Saint Francis de Sales says very aptly in Part One, Chapter Three of his “Introduction to a Devout Life”: “If husbands would not desire to amass any more than Capuchin monks, would not their piety be ridiculous, ill-regulated, and unbearable?”

Pope Pius XI, as well as Leo XIII, far from condemning economy expressed the wish that all should be in a position to benefit from it. Here is what is expressly stated in the Encyclical, “Quadragesimo Anno,” a replica one ought say of the famous Encyclical on “The Condition of the Working Classes” written forty years earlier:

“It is necessary to do everything possible that the share of wealth which accumulates (in certain hands) may be reduced to a more equitable measure and that a sufficient abundance of it is divided among the workers... so that they may increase through economy a patrimony capable of permitting them to meet the burdens of their family.”

There are in these lines a condemnation of excess and the justification of the practice of economy.

Excess constitutes the hoarding of wealth, the accumulation of reserves for one’s own personal use and with no thought at all for the common good — “to put in reserve and accumulate for one or several persons, under the form of gold, moneys, bank notes or even certain company titles, an excessive power of purchase instead of spreading it for the common good of the whole of humanity,” is the way Pius XI expresses it.

The practice of economy is clearly indicated: “Under the direction of the Eternal Law and the universal government of Divine Providence, notes Leo XIII, man is his law and his providence.” We must not ask God to reward our folly, our folly of spending wildly, putting nothing aside with the presumptuous assurance to oneself, “God will help me if I fall into want.”

There must be no passivity in our abandonment. We have to cooperate with God. Do one’s best and then count on Providence should be our motto.

Far from us be any such thing as pagan foresight which makes us practically ignore the role of Divine Providence and count only on the money we have piled up; which makes us lose sight of the real purpose behind the practice of economy which is decidedly not to guarantee protection from want to a few but to help along toward the well being of all. Must we remind ourselves that superabundant capital may not be spent according to the whims of the owner? The surplus wealth which people possess, as our Lord has clearly pointed out, must be considered as a “trust-fund to be administered for the good of others, a stewardship, a guardianship which is to be exercised for the good of the community and in the interests of the community.”

THE PROVIDENTIAL ROLE OF INSECURITY.

GOD is not the enemy of security. He wants man to earn the daily bread for his old age by his labor. He wants society to guard against depressions and to guarantee to all, a life protected by law. He requires certain privileged individuals to come to the aid of their brothers in need, especially, as it frequently happens, when society is powerless to help.

Does that imply then that God cannot permit insecurity for someone's good? Certainly not.

It is so easy to abuse security: Perhaps through selfishness by skimping one's life, refusing the entrance of love into one's life or setting up barriers to the possible gift of children from Divine Providence. Perhaps by purely pagan prudence, the attitude of the wicked rich in the Gospel, 'I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones'. Perhaps by pride. 'What is Divine Providence anyway? I have money and the means of making it bring in more. God doesn't count.'

In addition to its already precious role of crushing false hopes of security conceived by pagan-mindedness, insecurity has power proper to itself.

It forces us to think of God. Here I am. I have done all that I could, worked my best, saved without being niggardly but with legitimate prudence and now I am struck by a catastrophe — the death of the head of the family, or an untimely accident, war... I have nothing left, or if it is not so bad as that, 'Trial' has at least made deep inroads on the possessions I had.

What should I do? Get discouraged? Never!

I will call up all my energy; try to salvage from the present situation whatever can help my best efforts and count on Divine Providence without in the least neglecting foresight. God helps those who help themselves.

I must believe that Our Lord surrounds those who find themselves in need through no fault of their own with a special predilection. "Do not forget," wrote a navy lieutenant to his wife at the outbreak of the war of 1914, "that uncertainty permits us to count more on God... riches hide some of God's delicate attentions from us... We have the best of the game with God."

What a beautiful expression of faith! Since human aid can so easily fail, God owes it to Himself to come to the aid of those who put their trust in Him. "We have the best of the game with God!"

Consequently, abandonment to God is in keeping with wise foresight.

A person does his best to avoid falling into a state of need. If God requires that all or much of his efforts come to naught, he ought not despair; let him submit valiantly to the yoke again; if he has a lively faith, he will thank God for having permitted "the caresses of poverty." The individual, of himself, could never have achieved the actual poverty of religious life; he can now at least accept the privations permitted by Providence and strive to live more literally the Gospel precept: "Make for yourself purses that do not grow old, a treasure unfailing in heaven, where neither thief draws near nor moth destroys." Luke 12:33.

THE SNUFF BOX.

FATHER BERNARD VAUGHAN, known from the poorest to the most distinguished sections of London, as a famous preacher, the brother of several prelates one of whom was the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Herbert Vaughan, learned much from his father who was a colonel in the British Army.

One day, at table, the little fellow took a very greedy portion of jam. His father reproved him for it and clinched his correction with the comment, "Whoever wants to become a man — a gentleman — knows how to conquer himself."

The child was hurt and becoming somewhat impudent retorted, "Oh, after all, Papa, you have your snuff box!"

Colonel Vaughan immediately put his hand into his pocket, drew out the snuff box and before the whole group threw it into the fire.

The history of the Vaughan family provides many such incidents which make profitable reading.

That's what we call fair play. If one wants to get another to do something, he must first of all do it himself. There should be justice. Not that children have a right to judge their parents, but parents should be careful not to give their children occasion to judge them badly.

We are sometimes amazed when young people who were very pious at one time and who have received a Christian education from start to finish, later on abandon the practice of their Faith. We must go back to the source. The mother was a practicing Catholic, the father suited himself about attendance at Mass; he had very quickly given up family prayer. The children rarely saw him perform an act of worship. No other explanation is needed to clarify everything.

The same holds true for the spirit of sacrifice, for prayer, and for refined manners.

Here is a child at table who has a mania for crumbling his bread into little pieces or to scatter crumbs all about his plate. The mother corrects him, for it. — "Oh but Papa does it too!"

So it goes with everything. People say they are terrible children. Why of course, all children are terrible. They record with unerring fidelity the examples they witness. And since examples strike incomparably harder than words, parents preach in vain, if they themselves do not practice; instead of forming, they deform. Who knows whether the little irregularities of today will not culminate in the regrettable crimes of tomorrow?

Great consideration should be given to the fact that "the child is father to the man." Parents are therefore bound to watch themselves, their habits, their behavior, their speech.

Parents will be so free at table; they criticize the Pope, the bishops, the pastor, such and such persons among their relatives and acquaintances; their judgments are only too frequently severe or at least imprudent. Need they be astonished if later their children "who come from such Christian families," are free in passing criticisms about their highest superiors and other persons most deserving of respect. Whose fault is it?

"But they're so little; they don't understand what we're talking about!" How do you know? Although they do not understand everything or at least not right away, some impression will stay with them, and the habit of judging indiscriminately will be well planted to sprout later. What great damage is done! What out-and-out imprudence!

'I will pay great attention to my children. They can be my best educators. I should give them the least possible occasion to teach me a lesson.'

ESTRANGED PARENTS.

THERE can be such separation of soul between parents that they finally live their own lives; they no longer live together as husband and wife; they are father and mother, but not exactly husband and wife — a situation unmeasurably sad.

Sadder still is the home in which the father and mother still maintain husband and wife relations but do not understand each other at all; they are perpetually arguing or sulking or exchanging sharp words; they no longer love each other and consequently find that their life together offers nothing but constant occasions to make each other suffer.

If these unfortunate individuals have children, especially younger children, have they never wondered what possible questions might be tormenting their little heads; what bewildered anguish strangles their little souls, which vainly seek to bestow their frail yet ardent love somewhere in this remote region made bleak and barren by battles?

How can they decide whose part to take? They can't. "Whom do you prefer, your mamma or your papa?" someone asked a little boy. He hesitated a moment, then said, "I prefer them both." And even if the child's heart leans more toward the one than the other, how could it decide who is more in the right or more in the wrong?

Those wretched parents who are so out of harmony with each other ought to meditate often on the touching prayer of the little child who got the idea of walking his estranged parents down to the beach one fine evening; as he walked along the way with his father and mother on either side of him, silent and glum, mulling over their own sad thoughts, he said softly — but still loud enough for his parents to hear — this little prayer of his own making:

"O my dear little God. I feel so bad because Papa is angry at Mamma! Oh, if You knew how bad I feel! Please make it so he won't be angry anymore, so I won't be afraid anymore and so these terrible things, which you know about, may go far away from me because I am just a little child. Make it that I can love Papa and Mamma again with all my heart, my whole heart all full, because You see, my little God when somebody is angry I feel too bad and I am too afraid and, then, You know I am just a little child! Amen."

The Church is opposed to divorce, because it is an attack on the reality of love — and it is just that, for what is a love that is not indissoluble or the intimacies of marriage if they can be enjoyed with someone else during the lifetime of one's husband or wife; because divorce is the ruination of the family as Paul Bourget has the Jesuit Father Evrard explain in his novel "A Divorce": A boat happened to be at a port where one of the passengers wished to go ashore; there was an epidemic on board ship; no one was allowed to leave the boat. The particular individual was inconvenienced by it but the good of the society overruled. So too, it is much better that the home be saddened than that the family be sacrificed. The Church is also opposed to divorce because it brings nothing but unhappiness to the child.

The same is true when the divorce is not a formal breaking up of the family; it is enough for the parents to be at odds, to cause the child to suffer, and generally, quite intensely.

Charity to their children obliges the parents to try everything to reestablish their union which is jeopardized.

God bless the homes in which the arms of little children guard forever the close union between the father and the mother.

THE WOMANLY IDEAL.

PERHAPS no one has more beautifully extolled the womanly ideal than Charles Peguy.

What he admired first and foremost in woman was her special faculty for putting soul into the daily humdrum of the eternal repetitions of everyday life in the home. He has Our Lord say:

My love goes out to you, O most precious one
To you, most submissive at the feet of destiny,
Most subject to the masters of the feast,
Most eager and most solicitous.

I love you so much, O most earnest one,
You who are most responsive to claims of work
Most unknown and most glorious
Most attentive to the care of the fold.

The smallest action, the most ordinary, the most routine, though submerged in the greatest monotony of recurring days and engulfed by the unfolding centuries, can be of immense value if performed with a great love:

...You spend yourself utterly, O only needy one,
In washing dishes and keeping house
O Woman, you who set in order
both labors and days.

But then, woman, is not only a worker, a housekeeper; she is a mother, a mother who is solicitous for her little ones, a mother who never tires of contemplating the infinite, hidden away behind a curved forehead or stubborn eyes. Man does not sense it. He is not sufficiently delicate or spiritual for that. Woman alone has a glance sufficiently keen and supernatural to discover not only the corporal needs of a fragile and tiny body but also the deep and innocent soul washed by the waters of baptism and rich with countless graces, which must be put to good use in the future.

Nothing is so beautiful as a child falling asleep while saying his prayers, says God (according to Peguy):

I tell you nothing in the world is so beautiful...
Yes, I tell you, I don't know anything so beautiful in all the world
As a little child falling asleep saying his prayers
Under the wings of its Guardian Angel.

A little child, who laughs at the angels while beginning to fall asleep
And who gets his prayers all mixed up because he no longer has his mind on them
Who mixes up the words of the Our Father with the words of the Hail Mary
While a veil is already falling upon his eyelids
The veil of night upon his sight and upon his voice.

Truly, it is woman's honor and her duty, as a consequence of her vocation, to be very near to souls and to the supernatural world. Then too, woman is more loving than man. She has a sense of pity and compassion. She always has something in common with the sympathetic traits manifested by (Saint) Joan of Arc even as a little girl. One day she saw two little starving and sad-hearted children walking along a roadway. "It grieved me so much, I gave them all my bread, my noon-day lunch

and my four o'clock snack. Their joy hurt me: I thought of all the other starving people who had nothing to eat, so many starving people, countless hungry people. I felt that I was going to break out weeping. I gave them my bread. A beautiful gesture! But they will be hungry again tonight; they will be hungry again tomorrow... There, they have gone into the future, into distress, into the anxiety for the future... O, my God, who will give them their daily bread?"

Joan's great compassion for souls tore even more at her heart than her anguish over the physical hunger of bodies. "If only we could see the beginning of Your reign established, O my Lord!" she prayed.

Honor to Woman for the greatness of her heart!

HER HUSBAND'S HELPER.

PASTEUR'S wife was a precious aid to the renowned scientist who was her husband.

The help she gave him was not always scientific, intellectual, technical. In the organization of most homes, wives will not have to give their husbands only that type of help. Moral support is more essential.

It was a little home in which unity and understanding flourished but where money was scarce. The husband needed an auto for his work; he had an old jalopy and it had taken him three long months to pay for it. One day shortly after his last payment, the rear axle broke while he was turning a corner. The poor fellow returned home utterly discouraged. His wife who was courageous, confident, and who was furthermore expecting a baby, said not a word of reproach or discouragement. On the contrary, she tried to console him:

"Look, we are happy; God loves us. We ought to pay Him a little ransom for all the joys He has given us. Come, let us pray and not lose hope. He can't abandon us." Their hearts raised together to God, they found themselves more closely united than ever in their human love. Together they had drawn from the same Spring of Hope, the same Font of Goodness. They were united in perfect Unity.

It is clear that a wife ought to expect to find in her husband a strong man, someone who does not go to pieces at the first set-back; who knows how to struggle with the tempests and bring their bark safely into port. She certainly does not expect him to exhibit his virility by vain attitudes or a show-off's behavior; she does not expect him to swagger or substitute boasting or protestations for ability to act, for solidity of character, and for real bravery. She naturally much prefers one who is truly a master, a master in his profession or in his work whatever it is, a master in the conduct of the home, able to make decisions and to assume responsibility. She wants no irresolute or timid chap who takes two steps back for every step forward or whose will is changeable, capricious, petty; nor does she want a man who gets submerged by details and forgets the whole, but a man endowed with an eye for detail coupled with a power for organization. She does not want a man whom prejudices blind and who is not sure of himself; no, she wants a man who can be resolute without being tyrannical, determined without being narrow and stubborn when a need arises for changing one's tactics — a man of peace, of thought, and of perseverance...

What a list of virtues! Can they ever be found in one single soul? Let us suppose a man has the whole array of these virtues or even the principal ones among them, will he not even then need moral support at some time or other?

There are moments of discouragement, dark hours, either because events bring sorrow and anguish or because nature grows weak or health fails or vigor of character temporarily subsides.

How helpful it is in these situations, which are not at all impossible, to be able to find reinforcement in the companion of his life! They started out as two but life together has made them one; each of them must support the other in view of their common work.

To each the task is a true principle but when danger threatens, it is not too much to have to face the same threat together...

What security for the wife to know that she can find in her husband the help she dreamed of! For the husband when he can be certain of being understood by his wife in periods of material or spiritual difficulty and not only understood but supported, cheered, and comforted!

‘Thank You, O my God, for giving me in my life-companion the intelligent, disinterested, attentive aide You knew I would need. You said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” You gave me another self. Help me to find in this other half of me, my other self, the strength to be strong.

GOOD SENSE.

A SISTER missionary describes the following family episode, which took place in the Congo:

Strong stalwart Bateke who had recently married came looking for me one morning with a very dejected appearance, or perhaps, disgusted would be more correct.

“Well now, my friend, what’s the matter? Aren’t things going well? “Is your wife sick?”

“Oh no, Sister, she’s not sick.” (This in a very dry tone.)

“What’s the matter then?”

“Ah, that one” (meaning his wife). She doesn’t have any sense. “Nothing to eat! She’s always outdoors talking. Nothing is good in the hut. “She needs...”

“Well bring her here,” I interrupted to show myself willing to help. “I will scold her and remind her of her duties.”

“Oh no, that’s not enough!”

“What then,” I asked slightly worried.

“That one,” (still referring to his wife), “ought to come here for at least a month to get a head on her shoulders!”

“All right! Bring her.”

The next day my Bateke came back pulling “that one,” who looked very sheepish, after him.

“How is it, my daughter,” I asked her reproachfully, “that you don’t understand your new duties better? If you do not know how to keep house or prepare a meal for your husband, it would be better to come back with us for several days, maybe a month. Do you want to?”

“Oh yes,” she sighed.

“That is fine,” beamed the happy husband.

Obediently the young wife began her new apprenticeship to learn how to prepare good cassava and fish with oil dressing, the staple food of her 'lord and master'.

Bateke came to see his recluse before the month was up.

"You can take your wife back now," I offered, "she will be wise and capable from now on."

"No, No," protested the obstinate husband. "She must stay the thirty days."

And at the end of thirty days, the couple was reunited. The last news of them was good. My Bateke is satisfied.

"That one has sense now."

What is possible in Congo is scarcely possible among us. A husband cannot send his wife back to school for a course in Home Economics or back home to her mother to be instructed in her duties... As a consequence, his home is run helter-skelter fashion. Nothing is ready on time, the food is spoiled, the clothing is not properly cared for, the bills are not paid, the accounts are not kept straight, the children are not dressed on time — there is general hubbub. How can there be peace in such a home where a woman has no sense?

Sometimes it is the man of the house who lacks sense. He manifests no business ability at all; wastes time and money; has no feeling for organization or sense of value; invests foolishly on the word of others and is an easy mark for wily and scheming confidence men. He is hesitant; can never make up his mind or if he does make a decision, he corrects it the next moment; begins everything but finishes nothing; undertakes a profession in which he expects to move mountains and work marvels only to abandon it several months later through lassitude or because he ambitions a career more to his liking and more lucrative.

This changing humor makes him choose one school after another for his children; none of them are ever exactly what he wants. Naturally, the children suffer from it; they can't profit by their classes, lose out on grades, and are in danger of becoming changeable too.

For a man above all the qualities of the heart can never replace solidity of the mind. He has to have a head on his shoulders, quick discernment, accurate knowledge, the power to decide, if not promptly in delicate matters at least always firmly, the ability to revise his decision when advisable and when the evidence demands it, because obstinacy has no value and reveals even more than indecision that a person lacks sense; but he must also have the power to hold his own against wind and tide, even when the odds seem against him, provided of course, that what he looks upon as opposition is not some difficult obligation of the moment he should be meeting rather than fighting.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION.

A WOMAN educator of note in her book "L'Education selon l'Esprit," ('Education according to the Spirit') expresses an opinion that deserves full acceptance: "What is best for a young woman is not to be entirely absorbed in material works and the care of children but to keep a little freedom of time and of mind to continue her intellectual development. The gift she makes of herself to her own will be only the more precious; the services she will render them will be of a superior quality. She herself will be ennobled by these disinterested pleasures, defended against the temptations that are born of fatigue, boredom, and a barren interior life.

There are unfortunately some young women for whom this advice would be most difficult if not impossible to follow; they are obliged to work in the time they have free from family duties to provide for the necessities of life. But there are those who have leisure. That they ought to profit by it to cultivate their minds is quite evident.

The principal reason is the one already mentioned — to be able to give something of the intellectual riches they have acquired to their children later. One needs to know so many things to enlighten their young minds, to open up their little souls just at the threshold of life; their questions should be answered by something better than an irritable “Stop bothering me!”

Another advantage of growing in culture is that it helps one struggle against a sense of futility. Not that the thousand occupations demanded in a home are futile. But there are, over and above the essential things, a thousand little nothings with which one can fritter her time. That is the immense domain of the futile in which women flit about untiringly as a bird hops from bar to bar in its cage, a pretty bird of paradise.

But there is something worse than to be busy with little nothings and that is to do nothing. There is just a void, an exaggerated place left open for day dreaming — and the normal consequence — an open door for temptation.

“Because what’s to be done in a home unless one dreams?”

If one does not apply the mind to serious and uplifting reflections, the devil will be right on hand to turn it to fantastic hopes: one relives stories read, reviews step by step girlish infatuations, ruminates over the imaginary or real deficiencies in her husband... Temptations are not far away!

Even if conscience preserves such a one from sin, she is always in danger of trouble, extreme sensitiveness and boredom from the drudgery of daily tasks.

Good reading which elevates the soul and stimulates thinking, which supplements religious knowledge, puts one in contact with great souls, will inspire to virtue and produce wonderful effects in the individual.

At the present time, when the apostolate must deal with so many problems, is it asking too much of the one who expects to do good to be highly competent? The religious renaissance must begin with the educated groups. Ideas will always rule the world.

What poverty it is for women, so devoted as they are to the apostolate, to lack ideas; to live only by routine! They have forgotten but one thing — to light their lamps!

ENDURANCE.

ABBE HENRI PERREYVE wrote to a young man of twenty who had told him of his hopes to marry:

“Ah, my friend, next to the happiness of serving God in consecrated virginity, what is more beautiful than to link one’s life with that of a cherished woman; to share one’s whole soul, that is all his sorrows; to begin with her that brief pilgrimage on which there are so many joys and tears that there is scarcely time to do a little good? What is more worthy of an immortal soul than to give his love in youth to the soul he must love always and before God to purify the ardor of his desires by submitting them to the duties of fidelity and of paternity?

“Do not laugh at love as those foolish souls do who are incapable of it. There is no nobler word among men. Love is not the pleasure, not the selfishness of enjoyment; it is not the delusion of a brutal passion. The one who loves gives himself more than anything else. The highest degree of love is sacrifice. That is why he only knows how to love who immolates his rest, his joys, his fortune, even life itself for the being he ought to love on earth and in heaven.”

Wherever marriage is seriously and correctly regarded, the word sacrifice is part of its vocabulary. There is no doubt about it, marriage brings with it the sweetest of human joys that can be tasted on this earth; but it also involves self-abnegations that are essential.

The Countess of Adhemar wrote to Abbe Fremont, (who died in 1912):

“Man and woman are united, not as they often believe with the best faith in the world, to give each other happiness, but, in reality, to seek it of each other. As their individual concepts of happiness may differ, there ensues for both of them a painful awakening.”

That excellent bulletin the “Association du Marriage Chretien” (Association for Christian Marriage) carried a fine article by an author who identified himself with the initials C.B. The ideas expressed in it have much to contribute here:

“Love is not a bargain, it is not even an exchange; it is a sacrifice which should always be mutual. Each giving up and sacrificing the best of himself so that the best of the other’s self may live and grow.”

“Clearly the great test is endurance. Oh, if only the honeymoon could last forever. But that cannot be. They must pass from blind love to clear-sighted love; time requires this transformation but “the line” is not easy to cross — it is not easy to go from the torrid to the temperate zone. They must protect themselves against being deluded about this.”

“Two young people go up to the altar for the beautiful nuptial ceremony,” writes Father Lacordaire. “They bring with them all the joy and all the sincerity of their youth; they swear eternal love for each other.”

“But soon their joy diminishes, fidelity stumbles, the eternity of their pledges is broken to bits.”

“What happened? Nothing. Hour followed hour; they are what they were except for one hour more. But one hour is much.”

The author adds it is true “outside of God.”

In order to triumph over time, over its duration, over monotony, over the friction resulting from character differences, which become more evident with time, a supernatural spirit is absolutely necessary; it alone is able to call forth ‘sacrifice’, persevering ‘sacrifice’ inspired by love.

UNBEARABLE HUSBANDS.

To a brother of his who was very impatient, Saint Francis de Sales could not refrain from saying one day, “There is one woman in the world who must be very happy.”

“Who?” asked his brother.

“The woman you might have married had you married.”

Madame Acarie, a mother of six children was left a widow in 1613.

She later entered Carmel taking the name Marie of the Incarnation. Her husband had been an unpleasant character and helped not a little to enrich her with the virtues that led to her beatification. Once in a rare spell of good humor he admitted, "They say she will be a saint some day; I shall have helped her become one; they will speak of me at her canonization."

Guy de Rabutin-Chantal, the father-in-law of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, who took the saint to his home after her husband's death was extremely hard to live with.

"He belonged to those well meaning and difficult old men who work efficaciously to make saints out of their women when they have in them the stuff from which saints are made," commented one of his biographers.

After the death of a celebrated philosopher, his wife obtained an audience with the king of Sweden. The latter inquired with kindly interest about the habits of the deceased. The wife, in a sudden outburst, exclaimed, "Your Majesty, he was unbearable!" A certain historian recording her remark added, "If all biographers were as sincere as that lady, they would be able to engrave her judgment on her pedestal, highest of all the monuments raised to heroes."

Without accepting that opinion about heroes as our own — and admitting possibly that we are more willing to forgive them their foibles than others — is not the severe judgment on husbands a revelation of not too good an opinion?

And we could extend the litany. Feodor Chaliapin relates that a Russian general of his acquaintance used to give way to terrible fits of temper at home. The life of the general's wife was a veritable hell. Happily, one day she discovered a clever strategy. At the moment her husband's fury started to let loose, she dashed to piano and struck up the national anthem. Must we believe the marvelous results obtained? The general stood at attention; his anger cooled off.

Every woman can't have a general for a husband nor one so susceptible to harmony either. We know that music refines manners. How marvelous it can be on that point. But the best music for the wife in cases of this kind will be the music of silence.

Saint Monica's husband used to drink heavily and when he came home with insults on his lips or speaking unbecoming or unintelligible words the poor wife had to practice a patience that we can readily imagine. She answered nothing and waited until the storm passed to remind him gently and lovingly of the law of God. She won almost un hoped-for results, which testified to her sanctity: she obtained the complete cure of her husband who became a temperate and controlled man.

'Is there anything obnoxious in me which brings sufferings into my home? I will correct it as soon as possible.'

UNBEARABLE WIVES.

YESTERDAY, in our last meditation, the men were on trial. The chapter on the ladies will be no less edifying.

"What you need," said a man to one of his bachelor friends who was disturbed by a vague nervous disorder, "what you need is a wife to share your troubles."

"But I don't have any troubles."

"That is all right. You will have them after you marry."

Such a story is not very expressive of esteem for marriage. Woman certainly has the power to console, but also the power to cause suffering.

The husband scolds, the wife gets angry. Does that make things any better? The husband, once the outburst is over forgets about it; not so the wife. She holds in reserve, unless she is very good, amazing desires for revenge. Moreover, she is argumentative.

“Look darling, look at the pretty bird that’s with those two crows.”

“Yes, I see, but there aren’t just two crows, there are three.”

“No, darling, look, there are only two.”

“But I tell you there are three. It’s always like that. I never have the right to be in the right.”

And soon the tears drop from her lashes.

Some women will pout rather than argue.

After a dispute, which was of no great moment, a certain wife, pricked in her vanity, risked this imprudent threat.

“If you don’t yield to me, I won’t talk to you for fifteen days.” The husband paid no attention and thought that after a short while life would settle down to normal again. But it didn’t. Silence. Silence. She would not deign to answer his questions even those asked with the most angelic sweetness.

The husband, beside himself, came to a decision. He began to empty out all the cabinets and table drawers, take the pictures off the walls and was about to attack the drapes with a pair of scissors.

“What are you doing there?”

“I am looking for your tongue.”

Bursts of laughter restored peace. The pity is that the bursts of laughter had not occurred fifteen days earlier.

Tenacity has great worth. A woman probably has too much of it. She may expect to let it compensate for a certain strength she lacks. She realizes she is wrong because she is intelligent. She does not think she ought to yield because a miserable vanity gets in between her conscience and her decision.

It still remains that it is the woman in spite of her limitations and weaknesses who most often creates the happiness of the home and the man who spoils it. The moralist was not wrong who said,

“With all their faults, their perfidy, their subterfuge, their envy and their lies, with their strong perfumes, their paint and their powder, their imperfections and their wretchedness, poor women are so much more courageous, more generous, more patient, more virtuous, more faithful than we men!”

Let each of the married partners judge himself or herself by his or her own conscience, and, mindful of the happiness of the other, correct as soon as possible what might trouble the harmony of the home.
